

REMARKS AND ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration is respectfully requested of the Official Action of April 19, 2007, relating to the above-identified application.

The Claims in the Application are Claims 1 to 64.

Claims 3-7, 9-12, 15, 19-21, 27-31, 33-36, 39, 43-45 and 54-60 stand withdrawn from further consideration.

Although the Official Action lists "Claim Objections" on page 3, it is noted that no specific claim has been objected to.

The rejection of Claims 1, 2, 8, 13, 14, 16-18, 22-26, 32, 37, 38, 40-42, 46-53, and 61-63 on the ground of double patenting in view of applicants' co-pending Application No. 11/525,536 in view of *Davis*, US 5,818,491, is traversed and reconsideration is respectfully requested. The cited co-pending application has not yet received examination and, therefore, applicants request deferral of the double-patenting rejection until such time as one of the applications is in condition for allowance.

The rejection of Claims 1, 2, 8, 13, 14, 16, 22, 23 to 26, 32, 37, 38, 40, 46 to 48, 61 and 64 as allegedly anticipated under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) in view of the patent of *Davis*, U.S. 5,819,491 is traversed and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Claim 1 has been amended to more clearly describe and point out the elected embodiment shown in Figure 6. Thus, Claim 1 now defines the first longitudinal strip having a raised end lip. Also, Claim 1 specifies that the second longitudinal edge is provided with a groove space

bounded by a groove wall and a second longitudinal strip for accommodating in mating engagement the raised end tip of an adjacent first longitudinal strip with respect to the panel. Claim 1 further defines the downward stop, illustrated in Figure 6 as Item 134, which when the panel is in mating engagement with an adjacent panel extends over a top surface of the adjacent panel forming a sealing strip against the first wall of an adjacent panel.

It is believed that Claim 1 now more clearly distinguishes from the structures shown in the *Davis* patent. The above-mentioned features now defined in Claim 1 are not shown by *Davis*.

The Official Action alleges that the *Davis* structure has a second edge for accommodating an edge of the first strip. However, applicants submit that the second edge of *Davis* (44 in Figure 13) does not fulfill the conditions required by Claim 1, namely, that the second longitudinal edge is provided with a groove space bounded by a groove wall and a second longitudinal strip for accommodating in mating engagement a raised end lip of a first longitudinal strip of a second panel to be located in an adjacent position with respect to the claimed panel.

For the foregoing reasons, it is believed that Applicant's Claim 1 now distinguishes from the *Davis* patent. Claim 24 has been amended to include the features not shown by *Davis*, similar to Claim 1. As all other rejected claims depend directly or indirectly either on Claim 1 or Claim 24, applicants respectfully submit that the rejection on the ground of anticipation no longer applies.

The rejection as anticipated should therefore be withdrawn.

The rejection of Claims 17, 18, 41, 42, 62 and 63 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over the *Davis* patent is traversed and reconsideration is respectfully requested. The rejected claims relate back to Claim 1, either directly or indirectly. The features of Claim 1 that distinguishes from *Davis* have been pointed out above and those comments apply here as well. *Davis* fails to suggest any modifications or variations of his design whereby a person skilled in the art would arrive at the overall structure that is claimed herein. Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that *Davis* does not render applicants' invention *prima facie* obvious.

The rejection of Claims 49-53 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) in view of *Davis* taken with *Grob*, US 6,272,808 is traversed and reconsideration is respectfully requested. The rejected claims relate to the aspect of the present invention where the thermoplastic matrix contains cellulose fibers. This feature of the present invention is not shown in *Davis* and there is nothing in *Grob* that would suggest some advantage to be obtained by including cellulosic fibers in the thermoplastic structure of *Davis*.

Moreover, the rejected claims relate back to Claim 24 which clearly distinguishes from *Davis* and therefore even if cellulosic fibers were to be incorporated into the *Davis* structure, the resulting combination would still not reach applicants' invention.

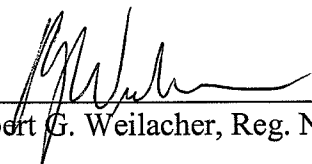
Therefore, applicants respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn.

App. No. 10/801,491
Amend. dated July 9, 2007
Resp. to OA of April 19, 2007

In view of the foregoing, favorable action is requested at the examiner's earliest convenience.

Respectfully submitted,

SMITH, GAMBRELL & RUSSELL, LLP

By: 
Robert G. Weilacher, Reg. No. 20,531

Date: July 9¹⁶, 2007
Suite 3100, Promenade II
1230 Peachtree Street, N.E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30309-3592
Telephone: (404): 815-3593
Facsimile: (404): 685-6893